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General and complete disarmament: missiles

The issue of missiles in all its aspects

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report was prepared by the Panel of Governmental Experts, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/67, to address the issue of missiles in all its aspects, including identifying areas where consensus could be reached.

The report discusses the background and present situation with regard to missiles, and identifies a number of key issues that should be taken into account in order to address, in a comprehensive manner, the issue of missiles in all its aspects. These issues include, inter alia, the global and regional security backdrop which provides the motivation, or lack thereof, for missile development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer, possession, deployment and use; the circumstances of transfer to and use of certain types of missile and missile technology by State or non-State actors; the issues of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation; the interrelationship between doctrines, strategies and missile-related behaviour; the relative salience of ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as of missiles used as delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction or conventional arms; missile defence; and the increased contribution of space-based capabilities to a wide range of human endeavours.

* A/63/150.

** The present report was submitted upon the conclusion of the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts.

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The Panel concluded, among other things, that it was important to have continued international efforts to deal with the increasingly complex issue of missiles in the interest of international peace and security and to deliberate further on the issue, specifically focusing attention on existing and emerging areas of consensus. The Panel also emphasized the important role of the United Nations in providing a more structured and effective mechanism to build such a consensus.

Letter of transmittal

I have the honour to submit herewith the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on the issue of missiles in all its aspects. The Panel was appointed by you in pursuance of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 59/67.

The following governmental experts were appointed as members of the Panel:

Hamid Baeidi Nejad (First session)
Director General for International Political Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamic Republic of Iran

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Miriam Ziv (First session)
Deputy Director-General for Strategic Affairs
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The report was prepared between June 2007 and June 2008, during which time the Panel held three sessions, the first from 4 to 8 June 2007, the second from 25 to 29 February 2008 and the third from 2 to 6 June 2008, at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The members of the Panel wish to express their appreciation for the assistance they received from members of the Secretariat of the United Nations, in particular, Curtis Raynold of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, Department for

Disarmament Affairs, who served as Secretary of the Panel, and Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu and Alyson Bailes, who served as consultants to the Panel.

The Panel is also grateful to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, for his support throughout its work.

I have been requested by the Panel of Governmental Experts, as its Chairman, to submit to you, on its behalf, the annexed report, which was unanimously approved.

(*Signed*) Santiago Irazábal **Mourão**
Chairman

Foreword by the Secretary-General

The international community has long harboured concerns about the accumulation, proliferation, technical refinement and threat and use of ballistic and other types of missile. States have responded by pursuing various unilateral, bilateral or multilateral measures. Despite the concerns of the international community, there is no universally accepted norm or instrument specifically governing the development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer, deployment or use of missiles.

The present report was prepared by the Panel of Governmental Experts established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/67 and is the third effort by the United Nations to address the issue of missiles in all its aspects.

The report addresses a number of important issues that should be taken into account in order to address, in a comprehensive manner, the issue of missiles in all its aspects.

Divergent views and the complexity of the issue of missiles led the Panel to conclude that continued international efforts are important in order to deal with this issue, specifically focusing further deliberations on existing and emerging areas of consensus. I note with satisfaction the emphasis the Panel attributes to the role of the United Nations in providing a more structured and effective mechanism to build such a consensus.

I wish to express my appreciation to the members of the Panel for completing their work and I commend their report to the General Assembly for its consideration.

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/33 A, the first Panel of Governmental Experts was established from July 2001 to July 2002 to assist the Secretary-General in the preparation of a report on the issue of missiles in all its aspects. That first report was welcomed by the Assembly in its resolutions 57/71 and 58/37, entitled "Missiles". Pursuant to Assembly resolution 58/37, the second Panel of Governmental Experts was established in 2004 to assist the Secretary-General to explore further the issue of missiles in all its aspects. However, at that time and given the complexity of the issues at hand, no consensus was reached on the preparation of a final report.

2. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/67, the Secretary-General, with the support of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, prepared a report to contribute to the United Nations endeavour to address the issue of missiles in all its aspects by identifying areas where consensus could be reached. By its resolution 61/59, the Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/168).

3. Also pursuant to resolution 59/67, the Secretary-General appointed a third Panel of Governmental Experts from 23 States (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Japan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America) to explore further the issue of missiles in all its aspects, including identifying areas where consensus could be reached.

4. The Panel held three sessions in 2007 and 2008, from 4 to 8 June 2007, from 25 to 29 February 2008 and from 2 to 6 June 2008, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Panel had a comprehensive, in-depth exchange of views on all aspects of the issue of missiles and agreed on the present report by consensus.

II. Overview

5. The issue of missiles continues to be a focus of increased international attention, discussion and activity. The potential of missiles to carry and deliver a payload of weapons of mass destruction quickly and accurately makes them a qualitatively significant political and military issue. In addition, the diversity of international interests on matters related to missiles poses a specific challenge for efforts to address the issue in multilateral forums.

6. Missile development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer, possession, deployment and use by States are linked in varying ways with the perceived security scenario at global and regional levels. For some States, the security scenario in their immediate regional neighbourhood is a principal determinant in their threat perception, while other States respond both to global and regional security developments. The expansion of national missile capabilities and the related elements of military posture have significant impact on overall security evaluations, both global and regional.

7. In addition, the use of guided and unguided conventionally armed missiles by non-State actors also has an impact on global and regional security.

8. Despite efforts made both within and outside the United Nations, no universal norm, treaty or agreement governing the development, testing, production, acquisition, possession, transfer, deployment or use of missiles exists. However, some past and existing treaties and agreements, whether bilateral, plurilateral, regional or multilateral, do contain specific provisions on particular types or aspects of missiles. In addition, some States have also adopted unilateral measures that deal with missiles.

III. Trends and developments

9. The important role of missiles of numerous types, both conventional and non-conventional, in many States' military doctrines and national and regional security policies, including their potential for offensive and defensive roles, is a continuing and broadening trend. The development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer, brokering, possession, deployment and use of missiles have remained a source of security concern or consideration for international peace and security, both globally and regionally.

10. Since the report of the first Panel of Governmental Experts of July 2002 (A/57/229), missiles of different types have been developed or have undergone technological improvement and some have been modernized, flight-tested or transferred either as complete systems or as component parts. Missiles and rockets with conventional warheads have been increasingly used. Missiles have also been modified and employed against objects in outer space.

11. States continue to seek different measures to counter the special characteristics and capabilities of missiles. There are contrasting points of view as to the implications of missile defences.

12. Developments and refinements of the technical characteristics and operational capabilities of missiles, both ballistic and cruise, including those capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, enable some of the systems to achieve greater effect and higher performance in terms of speed, accuracy, range and evasion. The use of stealth technologies, while becoming more widespread on cruise missiles, is still limited to a few States. Supersonic cruise missiles are also being developed.

13. Almost all armed forces continue to incorporate into their arsenals and use a variety of conventionally armed missiles for specialized roles in military operations, either as part of their modernization processes and/or as part of military doctrine reviews. Nuclear tipped missiles, although never used, continue to have an important role in the doctrine of some States.

14. States, groups of States, international and regional organizations have been increasingly active in international, regional and bilateral forums addressing issues specifically related to missiles. Some new mechanisms or institutions have been created and existing mechanisms have continued their work. These range from various United Nations resolutions, to measures taken by several regional organizations, and to multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral and unilateral initiatives taken by some States. However, there is still no universal norm, treaty or agreement

governing the development, testing, production, acquisition, possession, transfer, deployment or use of missiles.

15. Within the United Nations system, a number of resolutions have been adopted since 2002 that deal selectively with the issue of missiles. The General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions that deal with the issue of missiles and of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Some of these are presented on an annual or biannual basis to the First Committee (disarmament and international security issues) of the Assembly. The Security Council has, in the context of its mandate, approached the issue of missiles both thematically and in the context of regional or country-specific issues through the adoption of a number of resolutions.

IV. Issues relating to missiles in all aspects

16. In order to seek areas where consensus could be reached, as determined by General Assembly resolution 59/67, experts raised and deliberated upon key issues related to missiles that should be taken into consideration in order to address comprehensively the issue of missiles in all its aspects. These include, among others, the security backdrop (both global and regional) which provides the motivation, or lack thereof, for missile development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer, possession, deployment and use; the circumstances of transfer to and use of certain types of missile and missile technology by State or non-State actors; the issues of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation; the interrelationship between doctrines, strategies and missile-related behaviour; the relative salience of ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as of missiles used as delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction or conventional arms; missile defence; and the increased contribution of space-based capabilities to a wide range of human endeavours.

17. Experts recognized that the complexity of the issue of missiles, which, besides the various different technical aspects, also had strategic, political, economic and commercial implications, had been complicated by divergent perceptions of the nature of the concern. While these aspects made it difficult for the Panel to reach consensus on many missile-related issues, both fundamental and specific, experts nonetheless, identified the following elements for consideration in further discussions of the issue of missiles in all its aspects, without necessarily agreeing on all of them:

(a) The growing military significance of missiles, on account of their main characteristics, under a range of potential uses;

(b) The fact that ballistic and cruise missiles can be armed with conventional or non-conventional warheads. Both variants give rise to distinctive security concerns, both global and regional, which arise not only from their capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction or conventional ordnance but also from the difficulty of distinguishing between a conventionally armed and a non-conventionally armed missile in flight;

(c) The growing use of cruise missiles as a stand-off delivery system of choice for conventional ordnance, for States capable of developing or otherwise acquiring them, notwithstanding the specialized role of other missiles;

(d) The development of missiles with capabilities for increased manoeuvrability and a variety of countermeasures intended to defeat such systems;

(e) The commonalties between missiles and space-launch-vehicle technology, the right of all States to the development and use of space-related technology for peaceful purposes and the need to address security concerns without impinging on the peaceful uses of space-related technologies;

(f) The circumstances of access to and the use of man-portable air defence systems, missiles and their related technology by non-State actors;

(g) The impact on regional and global security of the use of guided and unguided missiles with conventional warheads by States;

(h) The impact on international peace and security of the potential use or threat of use of missiles with warheads carrying weapons of mass destruction by States.

V. Conclusions

18. **The Panel considered it important to have continued international efforts to deal with the increasingly complex issue of missiles in the interest of international peace and security and to deliberate further on the issue, specifically focusing attention on existing and emerging areas of consensus.**

19. **The Panel emphasized the important role of the United Nations in providing a more structured and effective mechanism to build such a consensus.**

20. **The Panel agreed that in view of the complexity of the issue, a step-by-step approach was required, although no specific course of action or combination of actions on the issue of missiles were singled out.**

21. **The Panel noted that it would be useful to try to develop understandings on how to categorize and describe missiles and how their different aspects (strategic, political, technical, economic and commercial) interrelate and their impact on global and regional security scenarios.**

22. **The Panel noted that that step-by-step approach could also include, among other things, efforts to further refine existing national measures of control over transfer and export of missiles and related items, including technology; reporting by States, as appropriate, of missile-related information under the various reporting mechanisms of the United Nations; and efforts to enhance global and regional security, including peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of peaceful uses of outer space.**

23. **The Panel also noted that voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures potentially could also be developed by States, as appropriate, in bilateral, regional or global settings with the objective of enhancing predictability, without losing sight of overall disarmament and non-proliferation goals.**